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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2003**

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CB03-197

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U.S. Population Passes 290 Million; Mountain and Coastal States Fastest-Growing

The nation's population grew by 1.0 percent (2.8 million people) between July 1, 2002, and July 1, 2003, to 290.8 million, according to estimates released today by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Among the nation's 10 fastest-growing states were four in the Rocky Mountains: Nevada (ranking first for the 17th consecutive year with a growth rate of 3.4 percent), Arizona (second), Idaho (fifth) and Utah (eighth). The remaining top 10 states were all coastal: Florida (third), Texas (fourth), Georgia (sixth), Delaware (seventh), California (ninth) and Hawaii (10th). States that moved into the top 10 this year were Delaware, California and Hawaii. ([See Table 2](#). [Excel])

Of the 10 fastest-growing states from 2002 to 2003, six were in the West and four in the South. The South now accounts for 36 percent of the nation's total population, with the West comprising 23 percent, the Midwest 22 percent and the Northeast 19 percent. ([See Table 1](#). [Excel])

California, Texas and Florida combined for 42 percent of the nation's numerical population increase between 2002 and 2003. ([See Table 3](#). [Excel])

California remained the most populous state in the nation with 35.5 million people in 2003. The second and third most populous states were Texas (22.1 million) and New York (19.2 million). There was only one change in the ranking of the 10 most populous states between 2002 and 2003, as Georgia (ninth) passed New Jersey (10th).

Other highlights:

- The nation's 10 most populous states accounted for 54 percent of the nation's population on July 1, 2003.

- The 10 fastest-growing states accounted for 57 percent of the national growth from 2002 to 2003.

- Of the 10 most populous states, three were in the Northeast, three in the Midwest, three in the South and one in the West.

- While the South had the largest numerical increase in population among regions from 2002 to 2003 (1.3 million), the West recorded the fastest rate of growth (1.5 percent).

- More than half (55 percent) of the nation's population growth between 2002 and 2003 resulted from natural increase, with the remaining 45 percent coming from net international migration.

The population estimate for Puerto Rico for July 1, 2003, was 3.9 million, up about 19,000 since July 1, 2002. Puerto Rico's rate of increase was 0.5 percent.

Included with the estimates were demographic components of change by state: births, deaths, net internal migration and net international migration.

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